

Statement of Candice Miller
Chairman
Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs
Committee on Government Reform
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Good morning and thank you for being with us today.

Our government has become increasingly reliant on scientific and statistical information to make critical decisions about our health and safety, our economy, and our national defense. Part of my job as a Member of Congress is to ensure that our government is relying on the highest quality of information when making decisions that affect millions of our citizens and thousands of our businesses.

The Information Quality Act (sometimes referred to as the Data Quality Act) was passed in 2001. The act required the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to develop guidelines for ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information that is disseminated to the public and to establish administrative mechanisms allowing affected persons to seek and obtain a correction of information. OMB issued its IQA guidelines in February of 2002 directing agencies to prepare their own guidance by April of 2002. Agencies have published their own guidelines and have had two years of experience with handling requests for correction of information.

We are here today to review implementation by three agencies: the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Fish & Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Health & Human Services. Quality information is an absolute necessity for each of them to fulfill their missions. Whether it is designating critical habitat for species protection, developing standards for water quality, analyzing and designating human carcinogens, or disseminating valuable public health information – the accuracy and quality of information must be of the highest caliber.

Today, we also live in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. Decisions by federal agencies can impose millions of dollars in compliance costs on companies or require them to reengineer their production processes to meet the requirements of regulations. And I fully support their attempts to protect us from critical health, safety and environmental threats. But the information used to make those determinations must be accurate and objective.

The Information Quality Act is a “sunshine” in government law meant to provide greater transparency to the process that produces research and regulation. Since its inception less than 100 requests for correction have been filed. Requests for correction of

information have come from extremely varied groups. Traditional business groups like the US Chamber of Commerce and the Kansas Corn Growers Association have been joined by environmental groups like Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and issue advocacy groups like Americans for Safe Access to challenge the quality of government disseminated information. Agencies that have granted relief under the correction process have removed information from websites, updated or added information to websites or documents, or linked further review to ongoing studies within the agency.

This is a far cry from the danger that was supposed to occur as a result of the passage of this act. Some insisted that there would be “death by data quality,” that agencies would be overwhelmed with requests, and that necessary regulation would be stopped. The facts do not prove that case.

One way to make regulation and the actions of government agencies less controversial is to make sure that we are relying on the best available science and the highest quality of information.

Government information will only become more critical in the future as health, safety, and environmental regulation are increasingly tied to scientific research. When jobs and lives are on the line, it is our duty to make sure that the best information is being used. And the Information Quality Act has provided us with an excellent mechanism to accomplish that goal.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today and I’ll recognize Rep. Lynch for his opening statement.